



SPECIAL
REPORT

CLIMATE WATCH

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Executive Director's Column

KEEPING SCORE

By John Shlaes

Over the last three years we have witnessed a tremendous increase in activity surrounding the climate change debate. Almost unnoticed are at least 18 major U.N. agencies or their working groups that have been established to deal with or emphasize potential climate change. In addition, a flurry of activity followed last year's United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil (the "Rio Summit"). At least four major worldwide private sector groups, or NGOs as they are called (for "non-governmental organizations"), have been organizing to engage the U.N. bodies and track their activities, initiatives and progress.

Interest in the climate issue is accelerating, fueled by the public and policy discussions taking place throughout the world. The first truly public discussions began in mid-1988 with the establishment of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) by the World Meteorological Organization and the United Nations Environment Program (UNEP). Maurice Strong, who organized the Rio Summit, was also instrumental in establishing UNEP in 1972.

The IPCC was established "to address the issue of climate change, its environmental, economic and social impacts and possible national and international responses to such changes." Soon after the IPCC was set up, 154 nations organized as the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee (INC) to negotiate a treaty on climate change. Within 15 months after its initial session in Chantilly, Virginia (February 1991), the INC had a treaty, the Framework Convention on Climate Change, ready to be signed at the Rio Summit. Once the treaty is ratified by 50 countries (perhaps later this year), the INC will become a permanent institution dedicated to the implementation of treaty objectives.

The World Bank is involved as well, administering the primary international funding mechanism called the Global Environment Facility (GEF). With its initial allocation of \$1.3 billion already committed, the

GEF will fund projects that encourage technology transfer and cooperation and other mitigation measures.

In the wake of the Rio Summit, the U.N. General Assembly formally established the Commission on Sustainable Development. With 53 member states, the commission will also review how well each country complies with the Framework Convention. A relatively new group of international legislators and parliamentarians, the Global Legislators Organization for a Balanced Environment (GLOBE) has been busy encouraging a number of international trade groups to focus on climate, environmental and trade issues. GLOBE was successful in getting the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade to revive its working group on environment and trade after 20 years of inactivity. The Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development is also responding to the "green" agenda by establishing a working group on environment and trade.

A number of non-governmental groups also are forming around the issue. The Earth Council, based in Costa Rica, is to serve as a "global ombudsman on environmental matters." At the council's first major meeting this March, Council Chairman Maurice Strong

said that the Earth Council will work with the Commission on Sustainable Development and the scores of non-governmental organizations that are concerned with the environment and development. Mr. Strong also will co-chair another new private sector group, the Sustainable Development Task Force. A part of the Rome-based Society for International Development, the task force wants to push governments to act more swiftly in the areas of technology cooperation and finance from the "enterprise sector" perspective.

Former Soviet President Mikhail Gorbachev recently agreed to lead a new environmental organization, the International Green Cross. Announced at an April meeting of GLOBE, the group will aim to mitigate and prevent environmental disasters worldwide and convene environmentalists from around the world to develop a global environmental policy. Mr. Gorbachev has already begun fundraising efforts in the West.

This issue of *Climate Watch* attempts to summarize the various major organizations tracking the climate issue. These brief descriptions, along with the diagram on pages two and three will give readers a better understanding of the scope of the activity and interrelationships of these groups. ●

INTERGOVERNMENTAL PANEL ON CLIMATE CHANGE (IPCC)

The IPCC was established in 1988 in conjunction with the World Meteorological Organization and the United Nations Environment Program (UNEP) to provide a focal point for research and information on potential climate change. The Geneva-based panel issued its first "scientific assessment" in 1990. This initial attempt to summarize the state of the science on climate change was updated in a 1992 supplemental report. The IPCC intends to provide its next climate assessment (on potential warming) by mid-1995. Headed by its original chairman, Dr. Bert Bolin, the organization gained "new life" after the adoption of the Framework Convention in May 1992, and it certainly will be active for several years to come.

Three working groups, which meet independently throughout the world, have been set up within the IPCC. Working

Group One is responsible for assessing available scientific information about climate change induced by human activity. Working Group Two is responsible for evaluating available scientific, technical, environmental, social and economic information regarding the impacts of climate change and potential responses to adapt to or mitigate it. Working Group Three is responsible for dealing with cross-cutting issues, including the development of a range of scenarios for future emissions, a technical assessment of the socio-economics of climate change impacts, and adaptation to and mitigation of climate change in the short and long term. The IPCC is an important body that will continue to advise U.N. climate negotiators. Its scientific assessments and other activities will play a central role in the ongoing climate change debate. ●

Shortly after the establishment of the IPCC, 154 nations sat down to determine whether or not they could negotiate a treaty on climate change. They organized as the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee (INC) on Climate Change and subsequently held five sessions—in Chantilly, Geneva, Nairobi, and two in New York. In just 15 months after the initial session in Chantilly, Virginia, in February 1991, these nations agreed to a new treaty which was hailed by some observers as a truly revolutionary way to deal with worldwide issues such as the environment, energy and technology.

The treaty's objective is to "stabilize greenhouse gas concentrations in the atmos-

Developed countries must report on national policies and measures adopted to pursue these goals and on how the policies potentially will impact net emissions. The treaty does not set a legally binding level of emissions reduction as a target, but it does state the "aim of returning these emissions to their 1990 levels." The treaty was ratified by

While the treaty provides a framework for

UNITED NATIONS
COMMISSION ON
SUSTAINABLE
DEVELOPMENT (CSD)

The United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED), which was held in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, in June 1992 and chaired by Maurice Strong, spawned many

The commission will hold its first meeting in June. According to its own documents, its

focus will be to provide a forum in which "Northern" (primarily developed nations) and "Southern" (primarily developing nations) country governments will be held accountable for their efforts to promote sustainability. Another result of the formation of the commission will be a strengthening of the role of NGOs (non-governmental organizations) in the U.N. process since they are expected to play a significant role in the creation and future direction of the commission. It is interesting to note that last year some members of Congress were considering a similar U.S. commission, and several groups have suggested this same concept to the new administration. ●

THE GLOBAL
ENVIRONMENT
FACILITY (GEF)

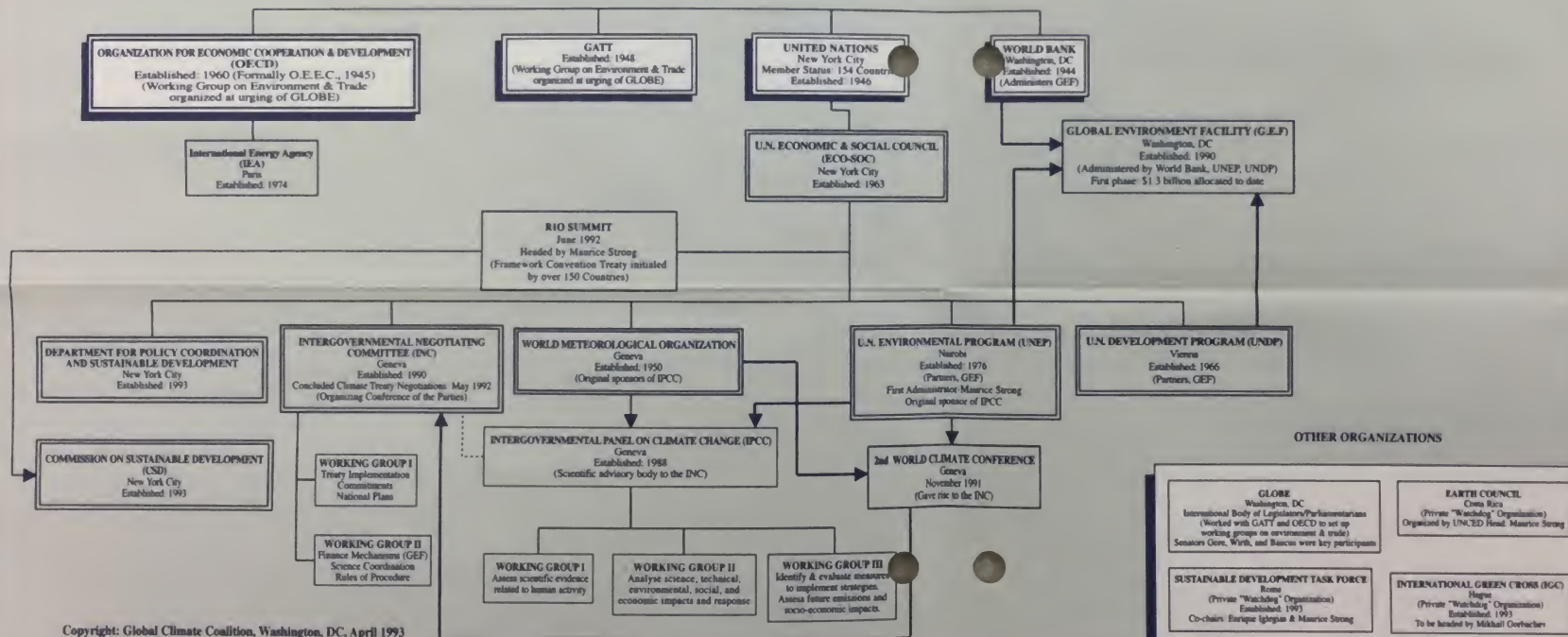
Administered by the World Bank, the United Nations Environment Program (UNEP) and the United Nations Development Program (UNDP), the GEF (pronounced "jeff") is a new effort by the U.N. to provide additional focus on sustainable development through the funding of projects that facilitate technology cooperation or long-term mitigation measures to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. The GEF has allocated \$1.3 billion to date in a pilot program for projects of this nature. However, GEF funding is for projects designed to mitigate global impacts and does not address regional or local programs. Environmental groups have criticized the GEF on this issue and also have called for more "transparency" (greater access) in the lending process, as well as the creation of additional "green funds."

UNITED NATIONS
ENVIRONMENT
PROGRAM (UNEP)

Several existing institutions that have been very active on the climate issue have recently become even more active. The United Nations Environment Program (UNEP) has several worldwide efforts under way. UNEP is expected to expand its role under its new executive director, Elizabeth Dowdswell, a former deputy minister of the environment for Canada who was part of the Climate Convention negotiation leadership. WMO will continue to support the IPCC and other joint efforts as well. UNEP, the United Nations Development Program and the World Bank will develop even closer and more collaborative relationships as a result of their partnership in the Global Environment Facility. ●

INTERNATIONAL SCORECARD: TRACKING CLIMATE CHANGE GROUPS

THE UNITED NATIONS AND INTERNATIONAL AGENCIES
CHARTING THE COURSE OF CLIMATE



OTHER INTERNATIONAL PLAYERS

Some new international players will be emerging, namely GATT (the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade) and the OECD (Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development). In late 1991 the GATT working group on environment and trade was revived after having never met in its 20-year existence. This has come about as the result of the hard work of a relatively new group of international legislators and parliamentarians called GLOBE (Global Legislators Organization for a Balanced Environment), who said that trade accords and growth in international trade have important implications for the sound use of natural resources, environmental protection and sustainable development. This group was originally launched by the late Senator John Heinz (PA) in cooperation with European parliamentarians. Other key leaders of this organization include former Colorado Senator Tim Wirth (now counselor to the U.S. State Department), Vice President Al Gore and Senator Max Baucus (MT). These legislators all have been key players in the congressional debate on potential climate change. GLOBE-U.S. is currently headed by Senator John Kerry (MA), and the GLOBE-International chairman is Takashi Kosugi of Japan, who also heads the Environmental Section of the Japanese Diet.

The OECD also has become very active in this area and has organized a working group on environment and trade, again at the urging of GLOBE leaders such as Senator Max Baucus. The International Energy Agency, a part of the OECD, also is involved in this issue. ●

NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS (NGOs)

Several additional private sector groups have been formed as the result of the Rio Summit. One that is now "up and running" is the Earth Council. This "global network," which is based in Costa Rica, held its first major organizing committee meeting in March. It is chaired by Maurice Strong, now CEO of Canada's Ontario Hydro; its new executive director will be Alicia Barcena Ibarra of Mexico. In his comments at the meeting, Mr. Strong said that the Earth Council would seek to cooperate with the newly formed United Nations Commission on Sustainable Development and the scores of non-governmental organizations that are concerned with the issues surrounding environment and development. According to conference reports, the council will serve as a "global ombudsman on environmental matters."

Mr. Strong and former Inter-American Development Bank President Enrique Iglesias will co-chair another new private sector group, the Sustainable Development Task Force of the Rome-based Society for International Development. Its concern is to "try and move governments to implement more swiftly" in the areas of technology cooperation and finance from the perspective of the enterprise sector, the implications for Agenda 21 (agreed to in Rio) for governance and institutions and "people's empowerment for sustainable livelihood."

Finally, former Soviet President Mikhail Gorbachev has taken on the leadership of a new environmental organization, the International Green Cross. The group, whose formation was announced at an April 15, 1993, meeting of GLOBE, was launched in Rio by the UNCED last year. According to

Mr. Gorbachev, the group will aim to mitigate and prevent environmental disasters worldwide and to convene environmentalists from around the world to develop a global environmental policy. The first step in that direction, he said, will be to develop "a mechanism for global environmental monitoring" with the ultimate goal of "trying to harmonize national environmental legislation" and "develop an international environmental law." Environmentalists fear that such standards would be set at the weaker end. ●

The Global Climate Coalition and *Climate Watch* will continue to cover the progress of the organizations described in this issue. Dozens of other organizations have formed at the regional, national and local levels that focus in some way on the climate change issue. NGOs will continue to be increasingly active on the climate change and other environmental issues. ●

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